



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

AUGUST 26, 2021

Passage of the 19th Amendment

Women's Equality Day celebrates the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which guarantees all American women the right to vote. The amendment changed federal law and the face of the American electorate forever.



Voting Rights for Women of Color

The drive to win the vote was a broad and diverse effort. A strong suffrage movement existed in many Black communities, but the laws, particularly in the South, barred Black women from voting for decades after 1920. It wasn't until passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 that these women obtained suffrage as well.

Additionally, Native American women fought for their right to vote until 1924, Chinese American women until 1943, and Japanese and other Asian American women until 1952. Finally, Hawaiian women didn't obtain the right to vote until 1959 when Hawaii became a state. Interestingly, the Alaska Territory granted Alaskan women full voting rights in 1913 – 7 years before the 19th Amendment.

Women's Equality Day

Women's Equality Day gives us an opportunity to reflect on the many benefits of equity and the role of women in our public life.

Women in public service and government have long served this nation by working to clear barriers, enforce laws, implement new ideas, and change people's attitudes.



Presentation/Poster



This presentation features women who continue to break gender barriers in the quest for equality: Vice President Kamala Harris, U.S. Navy Commanders Kristel O'Cañas, Kimberly Jones, LaDonna Simpson, and Kathryn Wijnaldum, Cadet Kasey Meredith, and Command Sergeant Major Veronica Knapp.

Just like the little girls in this poster, these accomplished women reflect the growing diversity within our Nation.

Vice President Kamala Harris (1 of 3)



Kamala D. Harris is the first woman, the first Black American, and the first Asian American to be elected Vice President.

Her father, who was Jamaican, taught at Stanford University, and her mother, the daughter of an Indian diplomat, was a cancer researcher. She graduated from Howard University and the University of California, Hastings College of Law.

Vice President Kamala Harris (2 of 3)



"My mother would look at me and she'd say, 'Kamala, you may be the first to do many things, but make sure you are not the last.'"

-Kamala Harris

During her childhood, her parents brought her to civil rights demonstrations. She was exposed to the work of role models including Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and civil rights leader Constance Baker Motley—whose work motivated her to become a prosecutor.

She began her career in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, before being recruited to the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and later as the City Attorney for San Francisco.

Vice President Kamala Harris (3 of 3)

Vice President Harris was elected district attorney for San Francisco in 2003. In 2010, she was elected Attorney General for California and re-elected in 2014.

From 2017-2021 she served as the junior U.S. Senator from California. When she defeated Lorretta Sanchez in the 2016 Senate election, she became the second Black woman and the first South Asian American to serve in Congress' upper chamber.

Four Female Commanding Officers

Four female officers of color have become the Captain of their respective ships in the U.S. Navy: Kimberly Jones, LaDonna Simpson, Kathryn Wijналdum, and Kristel O'Cañas.

They are the only four women to have ever acquired the post in the U.S. Navy. They are also all mothers.



Jones assumed command in July 2020, O'Cañas and Wijналdum in September 2020, and Simpson, in January 2021.

Surface Warfare Officers

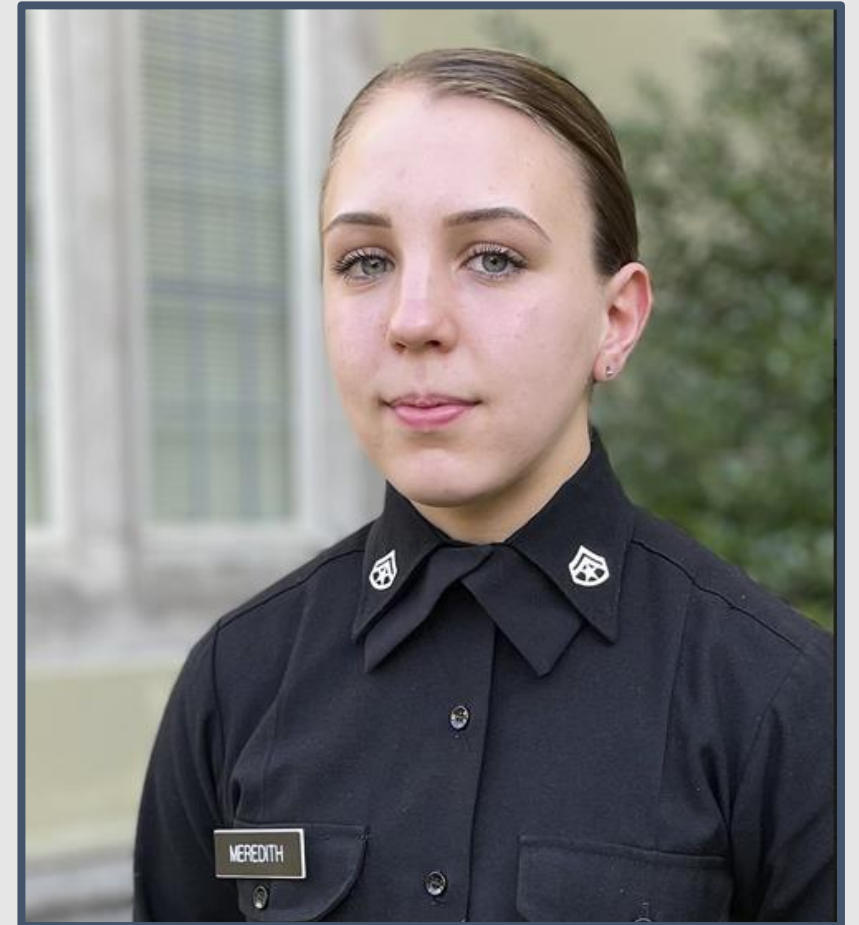
More than 11,000 Surface Warfare Officers (SWOs) are serving on active duty. Of those, approximately 21% are women. All four commanding officers have crossed paths with each other at various points in their careers.

The U.S. Navy said, *“All four of the commanders have balanced their careers with family priorities and requirements, and at this point in time, they look across the waterfront to see more diversity present in the Navy. These leaders have shared their stories so that future Sailors can understand that it is possible to succeed at more than just one thing.”*

Cadet Kasey Meredith (1 of 2)

Cadet Kasey Meredith became Virginia Military Institute's (VMI) first female Regimental Commander—the highest-ranking position a Cadet can earn—for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Cadet Meredith is the first female regimental commander in VMI's 182-year history.



Cadet Kasey Meredith (2 of 2)



VMI, founded as an all-male military college, was the nation's last state-supported college to become coeducational. In 1997, the first women enrolled after a legal battle that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Meredith will be the Corps Commander, responsible to the Commandant of Cadets for the training, appearance, discipline, health, welfare, and morale of about 1,700 Cadets.

Command Sergeant Major Veronica Knapp (1 of 2)



Knapp said, "Words can't express how honored and how bold I am to serve this elite division and our exceptional community."

In May 2021, Command Sergeant Major Veronica Knapp became the first female leader of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). She is the 34th person to hold the position at Fort Campbell.

Her selection represents a significant milestone for the U.S. Army.

Command Sergeant Major Veronica Knapp (2 of 2)

“Command Sgt. Maj. Veronica Knapp is the first leader in this historic division to have led both men and women at every level, from team leader to squad leader, all the way through brigade command sergeant major,” said Lt. Col. Kari McEwen, division public affairs officer.

She will lead more than 20,000 non-commissioned officers.

Conclusion

Today we are reminded we all have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to create a society that gives both men and women an equal voice.



It is a day that calls us to action—to renew our commitment to the equity and equal opportunity principles that define who we are as Americans.

End

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